1951 DECLASSIFIED CIA DOCUMENT ON HAJ AMIN AL-HUSSEINI

Haj Amin al-Husayni, the Mufti of Jerusalem, is one of the most controversial and notorious political leaders of the world. King of no country, having no army, exiled, forever poised for flight from one country to another in disguise, he has survived because of his remarkable ability to play the British against the French, the French against the British, and the Americans against both, and also because he has become a symbol among the Arabs for defending them against the Zionists. His suave penchant for intrigue, his delicate manipulation of one Arab faction against another, combined with the popularity of his slogan of a united Muslim world, has made him a symbol and a force in the Middle Last that is difficult to cope with and well nigh impossible to destroy. The names of Machiavelli, Richelieu, and Metternich come to mind to describe him, yet none of these apply. Alone, without a state, he plays an international game on behalf of his fellow Muslims. That they are ungrateful, unprepared, and divided by complex and innumerable schism, does not deter him from his dream.

The Mufti is a man of striking appearance. Vigorous, erect, and proud, like a number of Palestinian Arabs he has pink-white skin and blue eyes. His hair and beard, formerly a foxy red, is now grey. He always wears an ankle length black robe and a tar-bush? wound with a spotless turban. Part of his charm lies in his deep Oriental courtesy: he sees a visitor not only to the door, but to the gate as well, and speeds him on his way with blessings. Another of his assets is his roll-modulated voice and his cultured Arabic vocabulary. He can both preach and argue effectively, and is well versed in all the problems of Islam and Arab nationalism. His mystical devotion to his cause, which is indivisibly bound up with his personal and family aggrandizement, has been unflagging, and he has never deviated from his theme. For his numerous illiterate followers, such political consistency and simplicity has its

advantages. The Mufti has always known well how to exploit Muslim hatred of “infidel” rule.

The Mufti was born, Amin al-Husayni, at Jerusalem, probably in 1893. The Husaynis were one of the two most prominent Arab Palestinian families and claimed descent from the Prophet Muhammad, Tho rank of Mufti, bestowed upon Amin’s father, Tahir al-Husayni, by the Ottoman Government, signified that the bearer was an elder religious leader in the community. Amin’s elder half-brother, Kemal, was similarly honored.

Amin al-Husayni attended St. George’s School in Jerusalem, then went to al Ashar University in Cairo. He made the pilgrimage to Mecca, received the title of Haj, then went to Turkey where he served in the Turkish Army during World War I. After the capitulation of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, he was attached to the British Public Security Service in Palestine, changing over later to work for the French Secret Service in Damascus. He speaks English, French and Turkish in addition to his native Arabic.

As a writer and teacher in Jerusalem in 1920, Haj Amin was implicated in the anti-Jewish riots and had to flee to Trans Jordan. He was convicted by the court of the British Mandatory Government and sentenced in abstentia to ten years in prison, but the High Commissioner for Palestine, Sir Herbert Samuel, granted him a pardon, and accepted Haj Amin as the Arabs’ choice for the position of Mufti in 1921. In 1922 he was made president of the newly established Supreme Muslim Council, a position which gave him charge of the finances of the Wakfa (Muslim pious endowments), in addition to sou appointive patronage. If both the British and the Zionists hoped that these honors and positions of trust would neutralize Haj Amin’s proclivities for intrigue, they were mistaken. He was even at that time a single-minded devotee of Arab nationalism, an unalterable opponent of Zionism, and a man willing to go to any lengths to attain his ends.

While living in Jerusalem, the Mufti married a woman who remains nameless and had five daughters and a son. His son Muhammad Salah al-Din, born in 1924, was educated in Egypt, where he still resides as a sort of protege of King Faruq.

As Mufti, Haj Amin led the Palestinian Arabs in the fight against Jewish immigration and against the sale of land to Jews. He was a member of many Arab delegations sent to London to discuss the Palestine problem, notably the Shaw Inquiry Commission in 1930. There he testified that he had refused an offer of a quarter of a million pounds offered him by a relative of Dr. Chain Weizmann if he would not oppose the sale of Arab land. In May 1930 he appeared before the League of Nations in Geneva to protest further implementation of the Balfour Declaration. Within Palestine, he organized the Arabs and became president of the Arab Higher Committee formed April 25, 1936.

Discord and rioting between the Arabs and Jews continued in 1936 and 1937, climaxing in the assassination of the British Commissioner of Galilee in August 1937. The Mufti’s political party, considered responsible for this outrage, was outlawed and the Supreme Muslim Council dissolved. The Mufti, in danger of arrest, took refuge in the Harem al-Sharif (The Dome of the Rock) in Jerusalem. In this sacred Muslim shrine he was protected by a fanatical bodyguard at the British did not dare Invade the sanctuary. Moreover, certain officials in Whitehall maintained that the Mufti must not be completely alienated as he was the only outstanding leader in Palestine with whom they could negotiate. In October, disguised as a Bedouin, and under cover of night, he fled to Jaffa where a coastal sailboat smuggled him to Lebanon. There his spiritual position, coupled with strained Franco-British relations, saved him from arrest by the French

In the village of Juniah the Mufti set up a “citadel of intrigue”, established

communications with his henchmen in various parts of the Near Bast, and almost immediately became involved with agents of Italy and Germany. Mussolini, who had already proclaimed himself the protector of Islam, offered the Mufti asylum in Italian Libya, but the Mufti remained in the Lebanon until September 1939. When World War II began, the British requested the French to deliver the Mufti into their custody. While these negotiations were in progress the Mufti slipped away to Baghdad to join his friend and fellow-nationalist, Rashid Ali al-Gaylant, and there to plot for an axis orientation of Iraq.

On April 10, 1941, Rashid Ali’s coup succeeded. He proclaimed himself Prime Minister of Iraq, declared war against Britain, signed a secret treaty with Germany and Italy, and with the assistance of ‘The “Golden Square (an English term for four Colonels in the Iraqi army) attempted to eject the British from Iraq. The revolt was ill-timed and though it had considerable support from young nationalists, was quelled within six weeks by British troops. Rashid Ali fled with the Mufti to Iran. The Mufti took up residence in the Japanese Lagation at Tehran. When the events of September 1941 necessitated the evacuation of the Axis diplomatic staffs from that city, permission was also granted by the Iranian Government for the evacuation of about 300 Italian citizens. Dr. Luigi Petrucci, the Italian minister, realized that this was an excellent chance to evacuate the Mufti at the same time. Disguise as an Italian, Haj Amin traveled with the Italians by bus and truck to Erzerum, whence they continued their journey by train via Ankara and Istanbul to Rome. On November 5, 1941 the Mufti left Rome to join Rashid Ali al-leyland in Berlin.

The Mufti and Gaylani, both treated as guests of the Fuhrer, were put under the special guardianship of Dr. Pritz Grobba, head of the Arab Political Bureau in the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who, while Ambassador in Iraq, had planned the Rashid Ali revolt. The two Arabs were expected to be important

pawns in the hands of the Germans, to be shuttled back and forth between Rome and Berlin and used as propagandists to win Muslim sympathy for the Axis cause. Dr. Edmund Veesonmayer, the former German Minister to Hungary, who knew the Mufti and Gaylani at this period felt that the Mufti was the less practical of the two Arabs. The Mufti saw all problems from the Muslim point of view and was obsessed with the dream of a united Islamic state which would stretch from Morocco to Bosnia and eastward to Palestine. But the Germans found that the Mufti, in spite of his aspirations was unable to arouse Islam. Although he broadcast in Arabic over the Axis radio, and toured Croatia and Bosnia, trying to rally Muslims to the German side, he was not an effective propagandist. Deluded by his own pan-Arab convictions, the Mufti made the mistake of appealing to the Arab world as if it were an entity. Another cause of his failure as a propagandist was his negative approach. He had many criticisms of British imperialism but nothing constructive to offer to the Arab world in its place. Ho gave his last Axis broadcast on June 15, 1943, calling upon the Arabs to rise against the British and the Jews. The British were not alarmed. All through this time the BBC in London followed a policy of steady mild debunking of the Mufti, and refrained from open attack. The Germans from that time on considered him a liability and cut his subsidy to a subsistence level only. He had also come to loggerheads with Rashid Ali al-Gaylani and the two had ceased to have speaking acquaintance, so that they were kept far apart by the Germans. But Haj Amin al-Husayni had evidently secreted in Switzerland considerable sums which the Germans paid him between 1941 and 1943, and he has lived on these assets since 1949.

In May 1945 the Mufti went from Bad Castcin in Austria to Switzerland with some fifteen followers, but Swiss authorities, not caring to be responsible for such a difficult and controversial company, deported them at once to France. The group was housed in a suburb of Paris. Various Arab Governments appealed in vain for the Mufti’s return to Jerusalem. The French wished to

keep the Mufti, and the British, for their part, would not be anxious to have him delivered into their custody. The arrest of the Mufti would force the embarrassing dilemma of whether to prosecute him for treason and incur Arab hatred, or to ignore his war record and risk the charge of favoritism.

While living in Paris, the Mufti renewed his contacts with the complicated political machine which he maintained in various parts of the Muslim world, and, incidentally , renewed his feuds with certain Arab leaders. His principal henchmen in Palestine at that time included Jamal Husaynt, Dr. Husayn Khalidi, Munif Husayni, Ishaq al-Darsh, Rassim al-Khalidi, Ahmad Hilmi, Izzat Derwasan and Emile Ghuri. Even within this inner circle there were quarrels over money and position. None gave their complete loyalty to the Mufti, although all feared him. Within the Arab Higher Committee, the Mufti and Musa Alami were completely at variance. The Mufti has never had any friendship for the members and supporters of the Hashimite dynasty, and has always regarded King Abdullah of Jordan as a particular rival.

The Muftti, in spite of his genteel charm, was ruthless toward his opponents in the Arab group. He has a personal bodyguard of some twenty well disciplined and efficient gunmen who not only protect him but carry out his missions of assassination. The Nashashi i family has for centuries been a rival of the Husaynis in the Arab community of Jerusalem. In November 1961, Fakhri Bay Nashashib was liquidated at the Mufti’s orders while visiting Baghdad. Certain Arabs caught selling land to Jews were terrorized, and in 1947, a liberal labor leader, Sami Tana, was killed on the streets of Haifa. All sources attributed this murder to the Mufti. Yet, despite this effort to discipline Palestinian Arabs, he was unable to gain effective control over them. He was feared by his associates, who regretted his return to Cairo, but who dared not challenge his decisions. His followers existed in every Arab country, however, and constant intrigue was going on in his behalf in Egypt, Syria and the Lebanon.

In March 1946 there were rumors that the British wished to deport the Mufti to the Seychelles, and there were counter rumors that several Arab countries had offered him refuge. Foreign Secretary Bevin had reputedly made a request to the French Foreign Office for the extradition of the Mufti and had been refused. Bevin then requested that the Mufti be kept under surveillance so that he might not leave France. While members of the French, British and American Intelligence services were checking planes and visas under the suspicion that the Mufti might attempt to leave Paris, the Mufti boarded a TWA flight for Cairo on May 29. He had shaved his beard, dyed his hair, and was the bearer of a Syrian passport, issued to his friend Mar'uf Dawalibi. Dawalibi, then the legal counselor of the Syrian Legation in Paris, was a prominent anti-Western Arab nationalist and a firm collaborator with the Mufti. Before boarding the plane, Haj Amin kindly sent a letter to the British Embassy informing them that he was about to "fly the coop". The Syrian Master to France, who had assisted in procuring the passport, left hastily and quietly for Geneva. The Mufti, accompanied by his secretary Ali Rushdi man, was seen safely in the air, while the real Dawalibi was still in Paris. It was several days before the British ascertained that the Mufti had arrived in Cairo. The British Ambassador then requested the Egyptian Government to give no publicity to the presence of the Mufti in Egypt. King Faruq replied that the notice would be in the papers the next day, and it was. In the opinion of American officials in Cairo, this move by King Faruq gave Egypt increased prestige with extreme nationalist leaders in the entire Near East, and served to strengthen Egyptian leadership of the Arab League States where the Mufti was considered the best available threat against the Zionists. In the meanwhile the Mufti's latest move was hailed in the Muslim press, and he was accorded an unrestrained welcome by the populace. Prayers were held for the occasion in Al-Ashar Mosque, and cheers for the Mufti developed into anti-British, anti-Government manifestations which grew serious enough to require

police interference to quiet the crowd.

After promising not to take part in any political activity, the Mufti with four of his followers was established in Villa Aida, at Alexandria on July 1, 1946. Arab leaders at once began to beat a pith to his door, but were always received “unofficially”. Said the Mufti, “if the Jewish Agency is permitted to spread propaganda, collect funds, prepare armies, and buy ammunition, then the Arabs be at least have the right to meet and discuss their plans.” Haj Amin al-Husayni was determined that the Arabs should take up arms in the event of the partition of Palestine. There were indications in the fall of 1946 that the Mufti was in touch with the British, and had their tacit consent for his activities. A Lebanese Christian who interviewed him then said that he had never seen the Multi so pro-British. But the Mufti himself became increasingly discouraged with the situation. He decried the weakness of the Arab League, blamed King Abdullah for creating dissension among the Arabs by his “Greater Syria” project, and felt that Communist agents had made great inroads in the entire Middle East.

The situation in Palestine grew more tense in 1947. The Mufti, under constant attack from Zionists and unalterably determined to fight the partition of Palestine, traveled to Beirut in October, without a Lebanese visa, to participate in an Arab League meeting called to consider the Palestine problem. At this meeting the Mufti met stiff opposition to his plea that all the Arab countries assist the Palestine Arabs to resist the partition of their country. In December he returned to Cairo. When the actual conflict between the Arabs and the Jews came, dissension and jealousy between the followers of the Mufti and the pro-Hashimite adherents of King Abdullah succeeded in negating much of the Arabs’ military power. The Mufti’s choice for leader of the Arab army was the Iraqi General Taha al-Hashimi, while the Syrians insisted on Fauzi Quwugaji; thus two commanders took the field at the start of

the campaign, and later the situation was further complicated by the insistence of the Egyptians on still a third separate command.

A so-called Palestine Arab Government was set up in Gaza in September 1948, under the protection of the Egyptian Government. The position of President was left vacant, presumably for the Multi to occupy at a future date. The personnel of the Gaza Government is composed of his followers, and it was believed that the Mufti had had much to do with their choice. If the Gaza Government was intended to rival the Jewish Agency, the Arabs were ambitious. This small group of Palestine Arabs could net in any way compete with the international organization of the Zionists. The Gaza Arab Government existed for a time, on paper only, and then folded its tents. Moreover, the Arabs in Palestine were divided in their allegiance. One group desired to be incorporated into Jordan, while the Mufti’s group clung unrealistically to their dream of an independent Palestine Arab state. Gradually the chauvinistic appeal that the Mufti had had lost its attraction for the war-weary Arabs, and the Mufti’s influence reached its nadir in tho winter of 1948-1949. Haj Amin had alienated King Faruq and the members of the Egyptian Government, he had the support of no great power, he had been unable to weld together even the surrounding Arab countries into any unanimity of action or opinion and he had been unable to proclaim a Jihad.

In October 1949, Haj Amin went to Saudi Arabia, endeavoring to obtain support from Ibn Saud for the creation of an independent Arab Palestine. Messages from Whitehall were sent to the British Charge in Jeddah, instructing him to inform the Saudi Arabian Government that the British Foreign Office did not in any way approve of the Mufti’s plan. Shortly after this the Mufti left Jidda in King Ibn Saud’s plane on a mission to Damascus. He intended to dissuade the Syrian Government from its rumored project of union with Iraq.

In February 1951, Haj Amin presided over the World Muslim Conference held at Karachi. Although the Conference was unofficial in character, nearly forty delegates from Muslim countries attended. The principal resolution passed by the Conference was that “no power on earth can break the ties which bind the people of Pakistan and Kashmir”, and all Muslim countries were to direct their representatives at the UN to support Pakistan’s stand on Kashmir. Other resolutions dealt with Palestine, Africa, and Hyderabad, and all stressed the necessity for the cooperation of the Muslim world. From Karachi, Haj Amin went to Kabul in March 1951, where he attempted to resolve Afghanistan-Pakistan differences on the basis of private informal talks. He apparently hoped to encourage a settlement of the “Pushtoonistan” issue by again using the plea for Islamic unity, insisting that this unity is the only protection of the Muslim world against the evils of Communism. It is believed, however, that Haj Amin’s excursion into the affairs of Afghanistan and Pakistan is merely a phase of his most earnest purpose to achieve Muslim unity in order to drive the Zionists out of Palestine.

Latest reports regarding the Mufti indicate that the British Foreign Office would like to effect a rapprochement between Abdullah and Haj Amin, or at least between Abdullah and the followers of Haj Amin, to stabilize and unify the enlarged state of Jordan. Whether such a plan can ever materialize or not, the Mufti is still a power in the Middle East. His small, but well organized group of henchmen penetrate every country in the Muslim world, and the popular appeal of his slogan for Muslim unity cannot be denied, however unrealistic it may appear to be. There is no tangible evidence that he has ever desired Soviet support for his plans, and it is out of character that he ever would. The German Foreign Office could never discern that he strove for anything more than pan-Arab union. While the Zionists consider him slightly worse than Mephistopheles and have used him as a symbol of Nazism, this is false. He cared nothing about Nazism and did not work well with Germans. He

regarded them merely as instruments to be used for his own aims.
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